

AN ACT

Relating to Boards of Health in the several Cities of the Commonwealth.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:—

SECTION 1. It shall be the duty of the mayor and aldermen in each of the cities of the Commonwealth, which have not already voted to accept chapter one hundred and thirty-three* of the acts of the year eighteen hundred and seventy-seven, to notify and warn the legal voters of said cities to vote upon the acceptance of said act at the then next meeting in said cities respectively, for the election of city officers; *provided* the mayor and aldermen have been requested in writing so to do, thirty days prior to the time of holding said meeting, by fifty voters residing therein.

SECT. 2. In case of a severe epidemic or of danger to the public health, the mayor and aldermen of any city in the Commonwealth, where there is no board of health, may appoint such a board in accordance with the provisions of chapter one hundred and thirty-three of the acts of the year eighteen hundred and seventy-seven; *provided*, they have been requested to do so by one hundred voters in said city.

SECT. 3. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

Approved March 13, 1879.



* Authorizing the appointment of boards of health in the cities of the Commonwealth.

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, March, 1879.

DEAR SIR:—

The State Board of Health desire to respectfully call your attention to the enclosed Act, with regard to Boards of Health, hoping that you will have the kindness to call attention to its very important provisions, so far as you may be able to do so. The Board cannot better express their own views of the great value to every community of an efficient local health department, than by quoting as follows from the inaugural address of the Mayor of Somerville:—

“As I took occasion a year ago to express the opinion that the city had made a mistake in voting to accept the health act passed by the General Court in 1877, I desire now to say that the experience of the past year has led me to an entirely different opinion from the one then expressed. The Board of Health has been in successful operation since its organization in the early part of the year; and, beside relieving the City Council of a large amount of work, I am satisfied it has accomplished more in the way of abating a large number of nuisances than it would have been possible to accomplish under the old law. It has also commenced a systematic examination of the house-drainage throughout the city, and to enforce wholesome rules and regulations in all cases of contagious diseases. Without attempting to assign the cause, it is a matter of congratulation that during the last three years the death-rate among us has been gradually diminishing. The following is the number of deaths in our city since its organization:—

											Rate per 1000.
1872	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	400	24.30
1873	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	425	21.70
1874	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	490	22.96
1875	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	501	22.86
1876	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	444	20.18
1877	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	441	19.15
1878	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	385	16.21

“As the population of the city is larger than at any previous time, it is only reasonable to conclude from the above figures that the great work done in previous years in abating nuisances that had long been the cause of an unenvied notoriety to our city, and the greater care exercised during the past year, have been among the causes that have contributed to this happy result. Somerville now ranks, if not the first, among the first, of the cities of the Commonwealth, in point of healthfulness. The rate is lower than the lowest given in the report of the State Board of Health for 1877.”

In behalf of the State Board of Health,

Very respectfully yours,

CHAS. F. FOLSOM, M.D., *Secretary.*